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Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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S E C R E T VIENTIANE 0187

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
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SUBJECT: LAO-US RELATIONS

REF: STATE 2677

1. WE HAVE VERY MUCH IN MIND ISSUES RAIED BY REFTEL. IN FACT DCM WAS SEEING SECRETARY OF CABINET PHENG NORINDR ON THE SUBJECT OF SOUVANNA'S ENDORSEMENT OF 18-POINT PROGRAM WHEN REFTEL RECEIVED.

2. WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SOUVANNA WISHES DELIBERATELY TO COMPLICATE US-LAO RELATIONS OR SEE US SUPPORT FOR THE PGNU REDUCED IN ANY WAY. ON THE CONTRARY, WE BELIEVE HE CONTINUES TO SEE OUR SUPPORT AND HIS OWN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES AS IMPORTANT FACTORS IN HIS POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE PATHET LAO.

3. THIS SAID, WE RECOGNIZE SOUVANNA SEEMS TO HAVE CONCLUDED THAT, IF THIS COALITION IS TO WORK, THE VIENTIANE SIDE MUST ULTIMATELY YIELD ON ALL BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IF THE PATHET LAO REFUSE TO DO SO. IN REGARD TO SUCH ISSUES AS PHOUMI VONGVICHIT'S UNGA SPEECH OR CURRENTLY THE 18 POINTS, WE BELIEVE SOUVANNA SEES THESE AS NECESSARY CONCESSIONS TO THE PATHET LAO WHICH ARE AT THE SAME TIME NOT SO ANNOYING
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TO THE UNITED STATES AS TO DO GREAT HARM TO US-LAO

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RELATIONS.

4. A FURTHER COMPLICATING FACTOR, HOWEVER, IS SOUVANNA'S SECLUSION AT LUANG PRABANG, WHICH AFFORDS SOUPHANOUVONG KYHSE AND FREQUENT CONTACT WITH HIM AND CUTS OUT THE VIENTIANE SIDE. HMUCH OF THE INFORMATION SOUVANNA IS NOW GETTING EMANATES FROM THE PATHET LAO-- WITNESS HIS ECHOING OF PHOUMI VONGVICHIT'S CANARD ABOUT INVOLVEMENT BY PHOUMI NOSAVAN AND THE THAI IN THE BAN HOUEI SAI INCIDENT. THIS EXPOSURE TO THE PATHET LAO POINT OF VIEW NO DOUBT COLORS SOUVANNA'S JUDGMENTS AND EXACERBATES HIS ALWAYS-SUSPICIOUS ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS RIGHT-WING COLLEAGUES. AS A FURTHER INDICATION OF SOUVANNA'S CURRENT DEPENDENCE ON THE PATHET LAO, WE HAVE LEARNED THAT SOUVANNA'S NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE, CITED REFTEL, WAS DRAFTED (AS SOME OF ITS PHRASEOLOGY WOULD SUGGEST) BY SOUPHANOUVONG OR PHOUMI.

5. IN THE SPECIFIC CASE OF THE FINAL LANGUAGE OF THE 18 POINTS, WE FINALLY OBTAINED TEXT ONLY ON MORNING OF JANUARY 8. (DEPT WILL RECALL THAT, AS REPORTED OTHER CHANNELS, CABINET ITSELF DID NOT RPT NOT HAVE TEXT AT ITS LAST MEETING AND ACTED ONLY ON BASIS OF WORD THAT THE TWO PRINCES HAD REACHED AGREEMENT.) IN PURSUING BACKGROUND OF SOUVANNA'S ACQUIESCENCE, WE HAVE HEARD FROM PHENG NORINDR THAT VIENTIANE SIDE ACCEPTED REFERENCES TO US AND THAILAND IN PREAMBLE ON BASIS THAT THESE WERE INCLUDED IN ARTICLE 1(B) OF VIENTIANE AGREEMENT WHICH FORMS BASIS OF PREAMBLE.

6. LAO COMMUNISTS' ATTITUDE, AS REFLECTED IN PHOUMI'S REQUEST FOR INCREASED FEOF CONTRIBUTION (VIENTIANE 0052), APPEARS TO BE THAT THEY WOULD LIKE MAXIMUM US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND MINIMUM OF WHAT THEY PROFESS TO CONSIDER "US INTERFERENCE IN LAO INTERNAL AFFAIRS." WE ASSUME THEY BELIEVE THAT FEOF HAS FEWEST STRINGS ATTACHED AND THAT, GIVEN LIMITS ON OUR OVER-ALL ASSISTANCE AT THIS TIME, INCREASE IN FEOF CONTRIBU- TIONS WOULD MEAN REDUCTION OF PROJECT ASSISTANCE,

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ADVISORY EFFORTS, AND OTHER PROGRAMS WHICH COMMUNISTS FIND LESS PALATABLE.

7. I SHALL SEE SOUVANNA ON JANUARY 13 TO TRY TO DISPEL SOME OF THE HEAVILY PATHET LAO ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH HE IS PRESENTLY ENSHROUDED. ON THE 18 POINTS, THE CHANGE IN THE PREAMBLE FROM QTE THE U.S. AND THAILAND MUST STOP THEIR INTERVENTION, AGGRESSION, ETC. UNQTE TO

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QTE ALL FOREIGN COUNTRUES UNQTE REMOVES THE PORTION WHICH WAS MOST OBJECTIONABLE. SIMILARLY, OUR TRANS-LATION OF POINT 6 NOW READS QTE TO SUPPORT ALL THE STRUGGLES OF THE PEOPLEIN INDO-CHINA, SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE WORLD OVER FOR PEACE, NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, DEMOCRACY AND PROGRESS UNQTE. THIS IS BETTER THAN THE ORIGINAL DRAFT BUT I WILL KEEP HEAT ON SOUVANNA RE THE RECOGNITION OF THE PRG AND GRUNK.
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